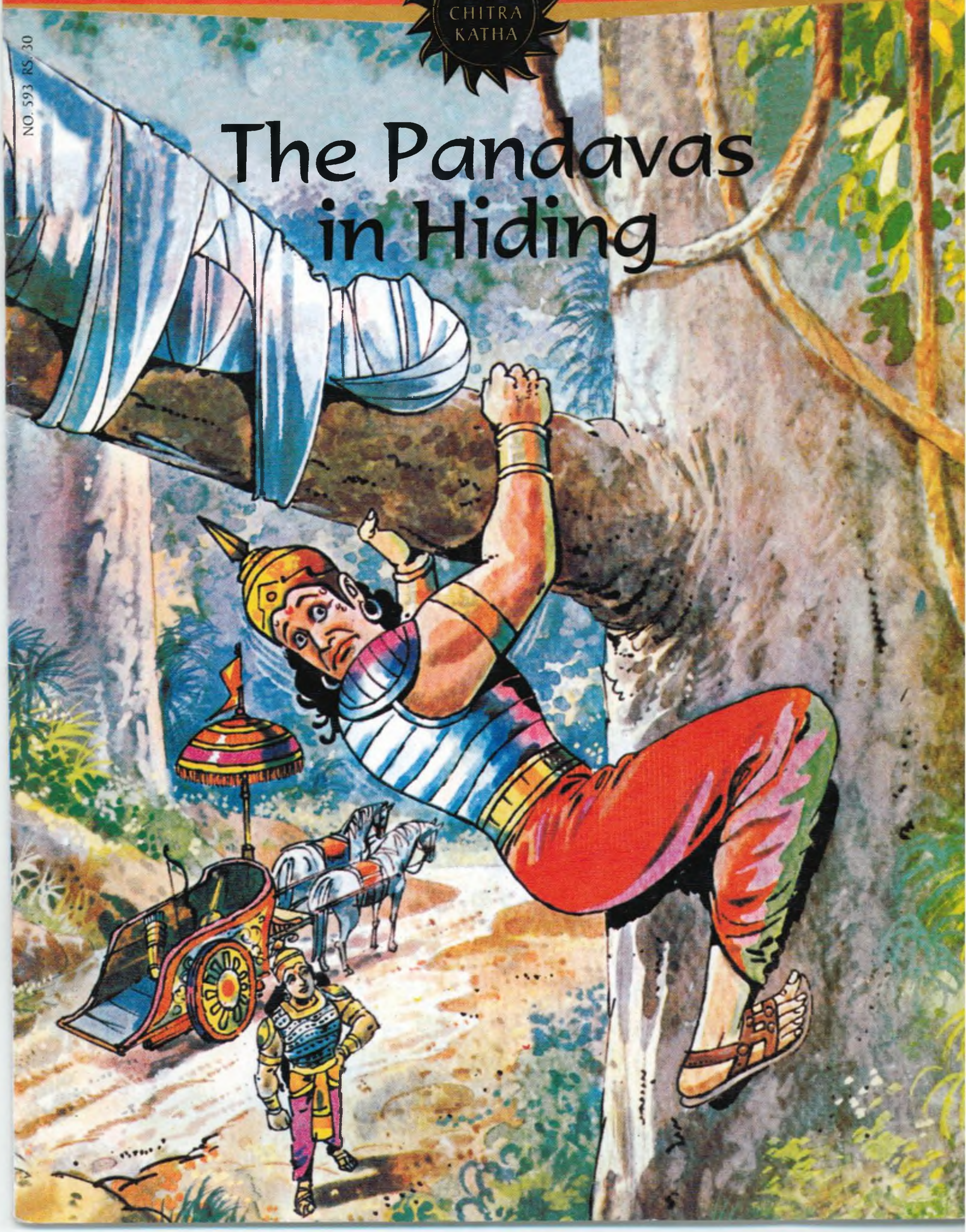
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

NO. 593 RS. 30

The Pandavas in Hiding




THE PANDAVAS IN HIDING
DURYODHANA, THE KAURAVA, ANNEXED THE KINGDOM OF HIS COUSINS, THE PANDAVAS, BY DEFEATING THEM IN A GAME OF DICE. IN GREAT GLEE HE WATCHED HIS FIVE COUSINS AND THEIR WIFE DRAUPADI LEAVE.
WELL, THEY WILL RETURN AFTER THIRTEEN YEARS TO CLAIM THE KINGDOM.
ONLY IF THEY SURVIVE THE TWELVE HARD YEARS OF FOREST LIFE. AND, EVEN IF THEY DO, THEY HAVE TO SPEND THE THIRTEENTH YEAR INCOGNITO.
THEN THEY WILL BE DISCOVERED AND THERE THEY GO INTO EXILE AGAIN FOR ANOTHER TWELVE YEARS! HA!
BUT SUPPOSE THEY ARE NOT FOUND OUT?
WRESTING BACK THE KINGDOM IS NOT GOING TO BE AS EASY FOR THEM AS LOSING IT IN A GAME OF DICE...
...FOR I HAVE NO INTENTION OF RETURNING IT.


TWELVE YEARS LATER—
THE THIRTEENTH YEAR, THE YEAR OF HIDING, WILL SOON BEGIN. ARE OUR SPIES ON THE ALERT, DUHSHASANA?
THEY ARE. AT PRESENT THE PANDAVAS ARE IN THE FOREST CALLED DWAITAVANA.
A FEW DAYS LATER AT THE ASHRAM OF THE PANDAVAS IN THE FOREST OF DWAITAVANA—
SURPRISING! NO SIGN OF ANY OF THEM!
HAVE THEY GIVEN US THE SLIP?
LOOK! FOOTPRINTS!
THEY'RE POINTING THAT WAY. LET'S FOLLOW THEM.
A LITTLE LATER—
BAD LUCK! LET'S GO BACK.
WHILE THEY WERE RETRACING THEIR STEPS—
TRACKS OF CHARIOT WHEELS!
THE PANDAVAS! LET'S FOLLOW THEM IN OUR CHARIOT.
I KNOW THIS ROUTE. IT LEADS TO PANCHALA.
DRUPADA'S KINGDOM? FASTER! FASTER!


AS THEY ENTERED PANCHALA —
THAT'S THEIR CHARIOT!
THEY'RE HEADING FOR DRUPADA'S PALACE.
A SHORT WHILE LATER —
HUMPH! CHARIOTEERS! COOKS! SERVANTS!
ALL THIS TROUBLE FOR NOTHING!
THE SPIES RETURNED TO DURYODHANA AND TOLD HIM OF THEIR FUTILE SEARCH.
DURYODHANA SENT OUT FRESH SPIES. FOUR MONTHS LATER —
WE HAVE COMBED THE LAND, BUT IN VAIN.
DON'T YOU HAVE EVEN A CLUE? FOR INSTANCE, ANY ACT OF VALOUR... OR STRENGTH...


ACT OF VALOUR? WELL...
WELL?
THERE WAS THIS MAN WHO KILLED JIMUTA, THE MIGHTY WRESTLER, AT THE FESTIVAL OF BRAHMA HELD IN THE CITY OF VIRATA.
HE'S JUST A COOK IN THE PALACE KITCHEN.
A COOK KILLING JIMUTA, THE MIGHTIEST WRESTLER...!
DURYODHANA SENT FOR HIS CLEVEREST SPIES.
COMB THE CITY OF VIRATA. IT MIGHT YIELD SOME RESULT.
ABOUT SIX MONTHS LATER SUSHARMA, KING OF THE TRIGARTAS, CAME TO MEET DURYODHANA.
I'VE COME TO SEEK YOUR HELP.
WHY? HAS VIRATA'S BROTHER-IN-LAW, KEECHAKA...


DON'T MENTION THE NAME OF KEECHAKA. THAT BULLY INVADES MY KINGDOM REPEATEDLY AND I DON'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO KEEP HIM AT BAY.
PATIENCE, MY FRIEND, PATIENCE.
JUST THEN—
MAHARAJ, OUR SPIES ARE HERE.
BRING THEM IN.
MAHARAJ, I REGRET TO REPORT THAT WE FOUND NO TRACE OF THE PANDAVAS.
BUT WE HAVE GOOD NEWS FOR YOU. THE DREADED KEECHAKA HAS BEEN KILLED.
KEECHAKA SLAIN!
WHO KILLED HIM?
A GANDHARVA.
A GANDHARVA? WHY?
BECAUSE KEECHAKA MOLESTED THE GANDHARVA'S WIFE, SAIRANDHRI, THE QUEEN'S MAID.

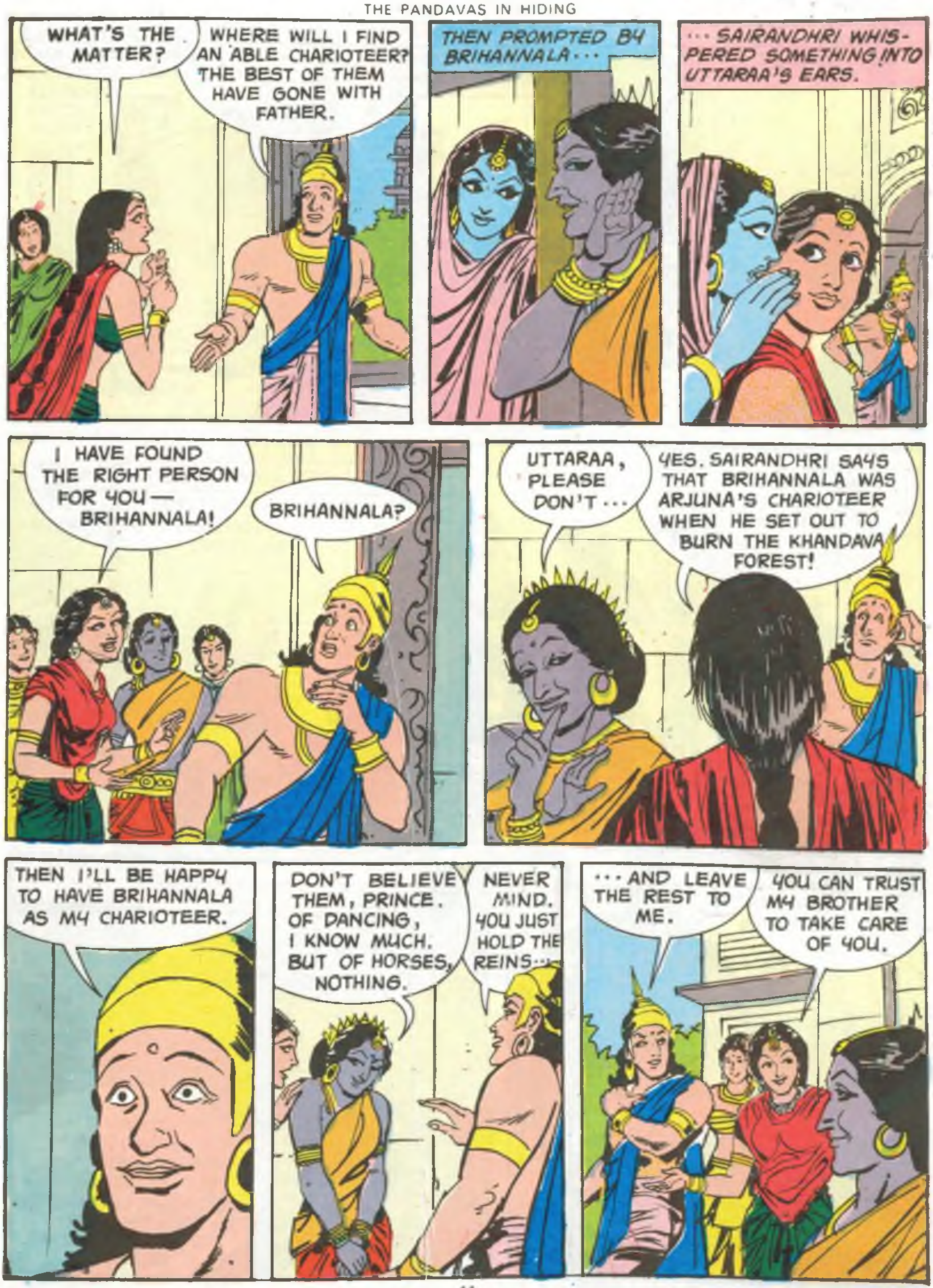

WHAT ABOUT KEECHAKA'S HUNDRED AND FIVE BROTHERS?
THEY WERE ANGRY WITH SAIRANDHRI FOR CAUSING THE DEATH OF THEIR BROTHER.
"THEY TIED HER UP AND TOOK HER TO THE CREMATORY TO BURN HER ALIVE. THEN SHE CALLED OUT TO HER HUSBANDS —"
O MY GANDHARVAS, COME TO MY RESCUE.
"SUDDENLY A MIGHTY GANDHARVA APPEARED FROM NOWHERE CARRYING A HUGE TREE. KEECHAKA'S TERROR-STRICKEN BROTHERS RAN HELTER-SKELTER."
HERE COMES THE GANDHARVA!
RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!
"THAT HUSBAND OF SAIRANDHRI HURLED THE TREE AT THEM."
AND THAT WAS THE END OF KEECHAKA'S BROTHERS.
KEECHAKA'S BROTHERS ALSO DEAD?


DURYODHANA! LET'S INVADE VIRATA'S KINGDOM AND CAPTURE HIS CATTLE.
FIRST A COOK KILLS THE MIGHTY WRESTLER. THEN A GANDHARVA APPEARS AND KILLS KEECHAKA... AND... THE GANDHARVA HAS HIS WIFE WORKING AS A MAID IN THE PALACE...
NOW THAT KEECHAKA IS DEAD, VIRATA HAS NO ONE TO PROTECT HIM.
NO ONE TO PROTECT HIM? I'M NOT SO SURE.
WILL YOU JOIN ME, DURYODHANA?
I WILL. I WON'T LET A FRIEND DOWN.
NOR WILL THE PANDAVAS LET VIRATA DOWN.
THOUGH THE ELDERS IN THE COURT, LIKE BHEESHMA AND DRONA, HAD THEIR OWN DOUBTS, THEY ACCOMPANIED DURYODHANA WHEN HE SET OUT WITH HIS HUGE ARMY.


WHEN THEY REACHED THEIR DESTINATION—
SUSHARMA, LEAD YOUR MEN AND ENTER THE ENEMY TERRITORY FIRST...
... AND WHILE YOU ENGAGE THE KING IN BATTLE, I'LL ATTACK ANOTHER PART OF HIS TERRITORY!
YES. WITH KEECHAKA DEAD, VIRATA WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FIGHT ON TWO FRONTS.
DAYS LATER, AT THE COURT OF VIRATA—
MAHARAJ, SUSHARMA HAS CAPTURED OUR CATTLE!
HOW DARE HE ENTER OUR TERRITORY!
LET EVERY ABLE-BODIED MAN JOIN ME IN THE BATTLE AGAINST SUSHARMA.
AS SOON AS THE ARMY WAS MOBILISED, VIRATA TURNED TO KANKA, THE LEARNED SCHOLAR.
SIR, I WANT YOU TO ACCOMPANY ME TO THE BATTLEFIELD.
YOUR MAJESTY, WHAT ABOUT VALALA, THE COOK?
YOU MEAN THE ONE WHO KILLED JIMUTA? LET HIM COME.


LET THE CHIEF OF COWHERDS AND THE KEEPER OF OUR HORSES COME TOO.
AS VIRATA WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE —
FATHER, I'M GOING WITH YOU TO THE BATTLEFIELD.
NO, UTTARA. YOU STAY HERE TO PROTECT THE LADIES.
UTTARA WAS VIRATA'S ONLY SON. AS VIRATA SET OUT WITH HIS ARMY —
FATHER SHOULD HAVE SENT ME. SINGLE-HANDED I WOULD HAVE FOUGHT THE ENEMY AND BROUGHT BACK THE COWS.
UTTARA'S SISTER, UTTARAA KUMARI, SMILED.
LET'S NOT TALK OF WAR. COME TO THE HALL OF DANCE.
THAKKA... DHIMMI... THA...

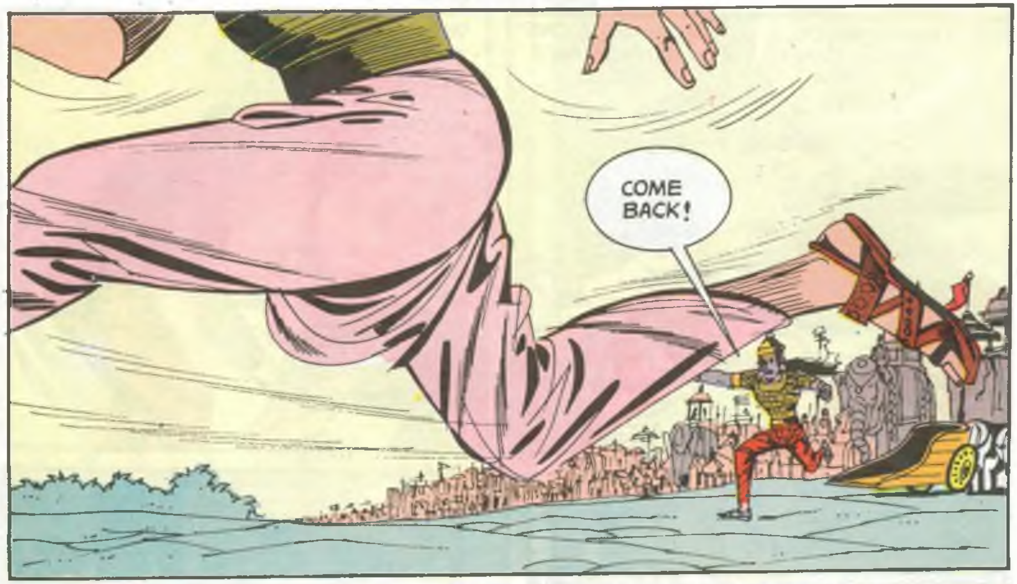

PRINCE!
A QUICKER RHYTHM, BRIHANNALA. A WAR IS ON!
THAKA DHIMMI— THAKA DHIMMI THA THA THA
DURYODHANA IS AT THE NORTHERN FRONT. HIS MEN HAVE CAPTURED OUR CATTLE!
GOOD! THIS SHALL BE THE TEST OF MY VALOUR.
WHEN ARE YOU LEAVING FOR THE BATTLEFIELD?
THIS VERY MOMENT. ORDER THE CHARIOT...
OH, NO!


WHAT'S THE MATTER?
WHERE WILL I FIND AN ABLE CHARIOTEER? THE BEST OF THEM HAVE GONE WITH FATHER.
THEN PROMPTED BY BRIHANNALA ...
... SAIRANDHRI WHISPERED SOMETHING INTO UTTARAA'S EARS.
I HAVE FOUND THE RIGHT PERSON FOR YOU — BRIHANNALA!
BRIHANNALA?
UTTARAA, PLEASE DON'T ...
YES. SAIRANDHRI SAYS THAT BRIHANNALA WAS ARJUNA'S CHARIOTEER WHEN HE SET OUT TO BURN THE KHANDAVA FOREST!
THEN I'LL BE HAPPY TO HAVE BRIHANNALA AS MY CHARIOTEER.
DON'T BELIEVE THEM, PRINCE. OF DANCING, I KNOW MUCH. BUT OF HORSES, NOTHING.
NEVER MIND. YOU JUST HOLD THE REINS...
... AND LEAVE THE REST TO ME.
YOU CAN TRUST MY BROTHER TO TAKE CARE OF YOU.


FETCH THE ARMOUR.
AS UTTARA STOOD READY IN HIS ARMOUR—
LOOK AT BRIHANNALA!
POOR BRIHANNALA DOESN'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO PUT ON ARMOUR. LET ME HELP.
WHAT A CHARIOTEER, FOR OUR MIGHTY PRINCE!
AT LAST THE PRINCE AND HIS CHARIOTEER WERE READY FOR BATTLE.
MAY YOU RETURN VICTORIOUS, BROTHER.
BRIHANNALA, TAKE ME TO THE KAURAVAS.
TODAY WHEN YOU SEE ME FIGHT, YOU WILL BE REMINDED OF YOUR OLD MASTER AND MY HERO, THE VALIANT ARJUNA.


AND AS FOR THE KAURAVAS...ER... WHAT DO I SEE THERE?
YOU SEE THE KAURAVA HEROES READY FOR BATTLE.
THEY LOOK FORMIDABLE!
TURN BACK, BRIHANNALA!
DID I HEAR YOU SAY TURN BACK?
YES. TURN BACK AT ONCE!
BUT YOU HAD ASKED ME TO TAKE YOU TO THE KAURAVAS!
I DID NOT KNOW WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT, THEN. BUT NOW I REALISE MY FOLLY.
I AM NO MATCH FOR THE MIGHTY KAURAVA WARRIORS. BRIHANNALA, TURN BACK.

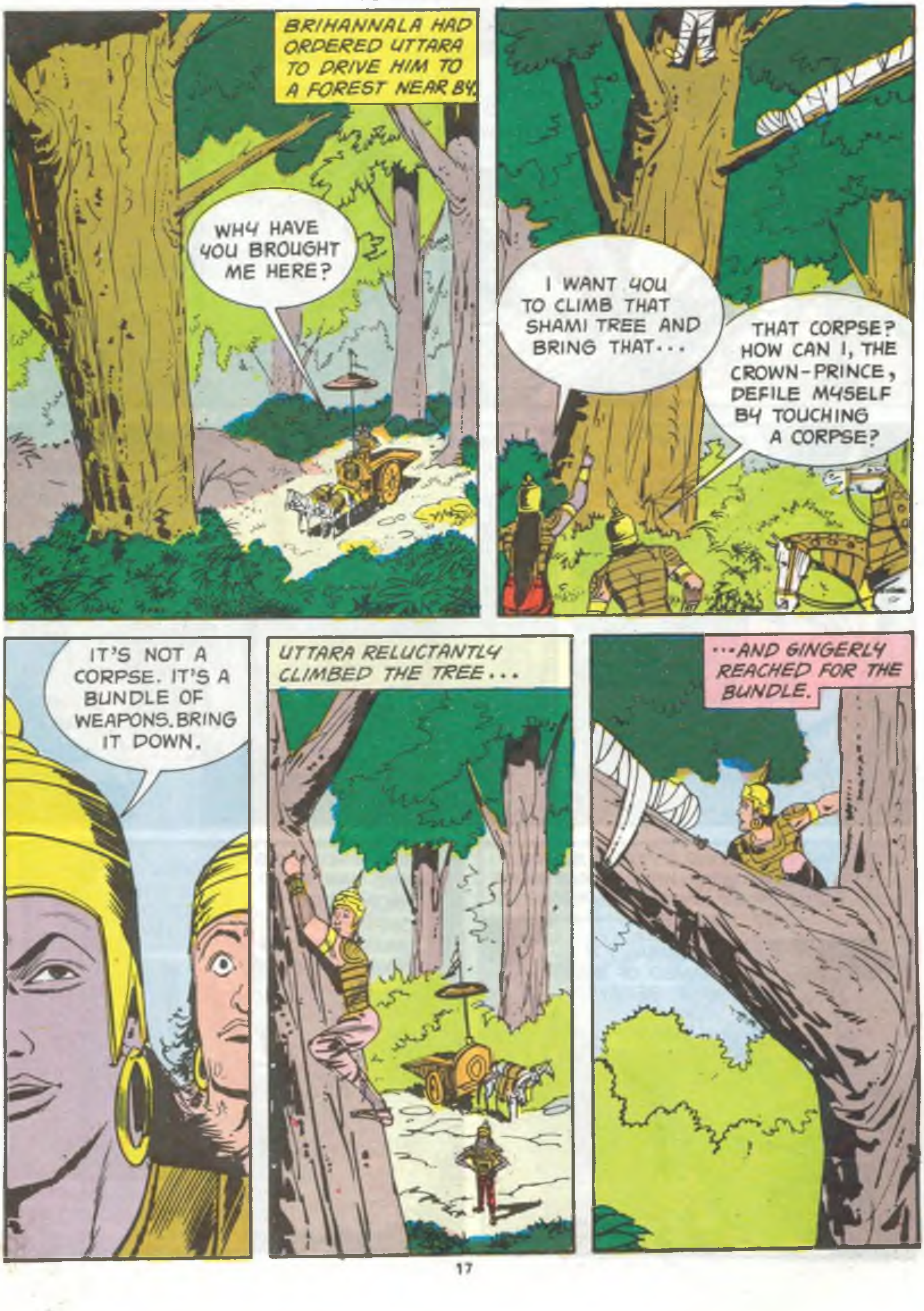

I AM SURPRISED. EVEN THE GIRLS WILL LAUGH AT US IF WE GO BACK WITHOUT THE CATTLE!
LET THEM LAUGH. I DON'T CARE. TURN BACK THE CHARIOT!
BUT PRINCE, IT IS YOUR DUTY TO RESCUE THE CATTLE.
LET THEM PERISH. I DON'T CARE. TURN BACK THE CHARIOT.
BUT BRIHANNALA ONLY DROVE THE CHARIOT FASTER— TOWARDS THE ENEMY.
OH! THIS FOOLISH BRIHANNALA WILL HAVE ME KILLED. I MUST SAVE MYSELF.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?


COME BACK!


THE KAURAVAS, WITNESSING THE STRANGE DRAMA, BROKE INTO LAUGHTER.
A WARRIOR ON THE RUN! AND A DANCER AS A CHARIOTEER!
HA! HA!


THE CHARIOTEER AT LEAST IS BRAVE.


BE A PRINCE, UTTARA. DON'T ACT LIKE A COWARD!
LEAVE ME ALONE! I CANNOT FACE THEM!
ALL RIGHT. I'LL FACE THEM AND RESCUE THE CATTLE. YOU BE MY CHARIOTEER.
THE KAURAVA HEROES WERE AMUSED BY WHAT THEY SAW.
LOOK, THE CHARIOTEER HAS LIFTED THE UNWILLING WARRIOR...
...AND... HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HERE THEY COME! THE WARRIOR HOLDING THE REINS AND THE CHARIOTEER THE BOW! BUT WHERE ARE THEY GOING?


BRIHANNALA HAD ORDERED UTTARA TO DRIVE HIM TO A FOREST NEAR BY.
WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME HERE?
I WANT YOU TO CLIMB THAT SHAMI TREE AND BRING THAT...
THAT CORPSE? HOW CAN I, THE CROWN-PRINCE, DEFILE MYSELF BY TOUCHING A CORPSE?
IT'S NOT A CORPSE. IT'S A BUNDLE OF WEAPONS. BRING IT DOWN.
UTTARA RELUCTANTLY CLIMBED THE TREE...
...AND GINGERLY REACHED FOR THE BUNDLE.


WHEN UTTARA GOT OFF THE TREE AND OPENED THE BUNDLE—
WHOSE WEAPONS ARE THESE?
THEY BELONG TO THE PANDAVAS.
THE WEAPONS OF THE PANDAVAS? HERE?
YES. THIS WAS HOW THEY PUT AWAY THEIR WEAPONS BEFORE THEY WENT INTO HIDING.
BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW ALL THIS? WHO ARE YOU?
I AM ARJUNA, THE PANDAVA.
ARJUNA! MY HERO!
THEN ARJUNA TOLD UTTARA ABOUT HIS BROTHERS AND WIFE DRAUPADI WHO WERE ALSO LIVING IN DISGUISE IN THE SAME PALACE.
O ARJUNA, I'M ASHAMED OF MYSELF. I HAVE BEHAVED LIKE A COWARD.
BUT MY FEARS HAVE VANISHED. I NOW FEEL CONFIDENT OF TAKING ON THE KAURAVAS.
THEN LET'S NOT KEEP THEM WAITING.
REPLACING THE WEAPONS THAT WERE WIELDED BY HIS BROTHERS...


...ARJUNA TOOK UP HIS OWN AND SET OUT FOR THE BATTLEFIELD IN HIS OWN CHARIOT WITH UTTARA AS HIS CHARIOTEER. AS HE BLEW HIS CONCH...
...DURYODHANA WAS EXULTANT.
IT IS ARJUNA!
THE FOOL HAS WALKED INTO MY TRAP. THE THIRTEENTH YEAR IS NOT YET UP.
THE POOR PANDAVAS! THEY WILL HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE FOREST.
I AM AFRAID NOT. THE THIRTEENTH YEAR ENDED WHEN THE SUN SET YESTERDAY. OTHERWISE ARJUNA WOULD NOT HAVE COME OUT INTO THE OPEN.
IT WAS BHEESHMA THE GRAND OLD MAN OF THE KURUS.


ALL THE SAME, I WILL NOT GIVE BACK THE PANDAVAS THEIR TERRITORY.
FOR THE MOMENT, LET'S THINK OF THE BATTLE ON HAND. YOU'D BETTER TAKE THE CATTLE TO HASTINAPURA WHILE WE KEEP ARJUNA BUSY.
THAT'S A GOOD PLAN. I'M SURE IT WILL WORK.
BUT ARJUNA WAS NOT TO BE FOOLED.
LOOK UTTARA, DURYODHANA IS HERDING THE CATTLE AWAY.
UTTARA SWIFTLY VEERED THE CHARIOT ROUND TO CHASE DURYODHANA...
...AND ARJUNA LET FLY HIS DEADLY ARROWS.


AS THE SHOWER OF ARROWS PLAYED HAVOC AMONG DURYODHANA'S MEN...


...THE CATTLE BROKE LOOSE...


... AND RAN TO SAFETY.


BUT SOON DURYODHANA'S MEN RALLIED FROM THE ONSLAUGHT AND FELL UPON ARJUNA.


MEANWHILE WITH THE HELP OF KANKA AND THE OTHERS, VIRATA HAD DEFEATED SUSHARMA.
I AM AS HAPPY IN OUR VICTORY AS YOUR CATTLE IN THEIR FREEDOM.
THANKS TO YOU AND VALALA.
BUT FOR HIM I WOULD HAVE REMAINED SUSHARMA'S PRISONER.
IN COMING TO YOUR RESCUE, VALALA ONLY DID HIS DUTY, O KING.
THE VICTORIOUS KING AND THE HEROES OF THE BATTLE — KANKA, VALALA, ARISHTANEMI AND GRANTHIKA — RECEIVED A ROUSING WELCOME IN THE CAPITAL.
WHEN VIRATA ARRIVED AT THE PALACE —
WHERE IS UTTARA? WHY IS HE NOT HERE TO RECEIVE ME?
YOUR MAJESTY, THE PRINCE HAS GONE TO THE NORTHERN FRONT.


WHEN THE LADIES TOLD HIM ABOUT UTTARA'S MISSION—
UTTARA WILL NEED HELP, BUT OUR MEN ARE TIRED.
PICK THOSE MEN WHO ARE FIT AND SEND THEM TO THE NORTHERN FRONT.
YES, YOUR MAJESTY.
WHEN BRIHANNALA IS BY HIS SIDE, UTTARA WILL NOT NEED ANY HELP.
BUT KANKA...
JUST THEN—
YOUR MAJESTY, THE PRINCE IS ON HIS WAY HERE WITH THE CATTLE.
MY BRAVE SON!
WITH BRIHANNALA AS THE CHARIOTEER, VICTORY WAS CERTAIN.
IGNORING KANKA'S REMARK, VIRATA TURNED TO HIS MINISTER—
LET THE CAPITAL BE DECORATED TO GIVE MY SON A HERO'S WELCOME.


VIRATA RETIRED TO HIS CHAMBERS AND SENT FOR SAIRANDHRI.
KANKA AND I SHALL SIT BACK AND ENJOY A GAME. BRING OUT THE DICE.
WHILE THE GAME WAS IN PROGRESS —
KANKA, JUST THINK OF IT! UTTARA, A MERE SLIP OF A BOY VANQUISHING THE MIGHTY KAURAVA HEROES. IT'S INCREDIBLE!
I AM NOT SURPRISED. WITH BRIHANNALA AS HIS CHARIOTEER, THE TASK MUST HAVE BEEN EASY FOR THE PRINCE.
STOP IT, KANKA!
IT WAS MY SON WHO DEFEATED THE KAURAVAS, IN SPITE OF HIS EFFEMINATE CHARIOTEER.

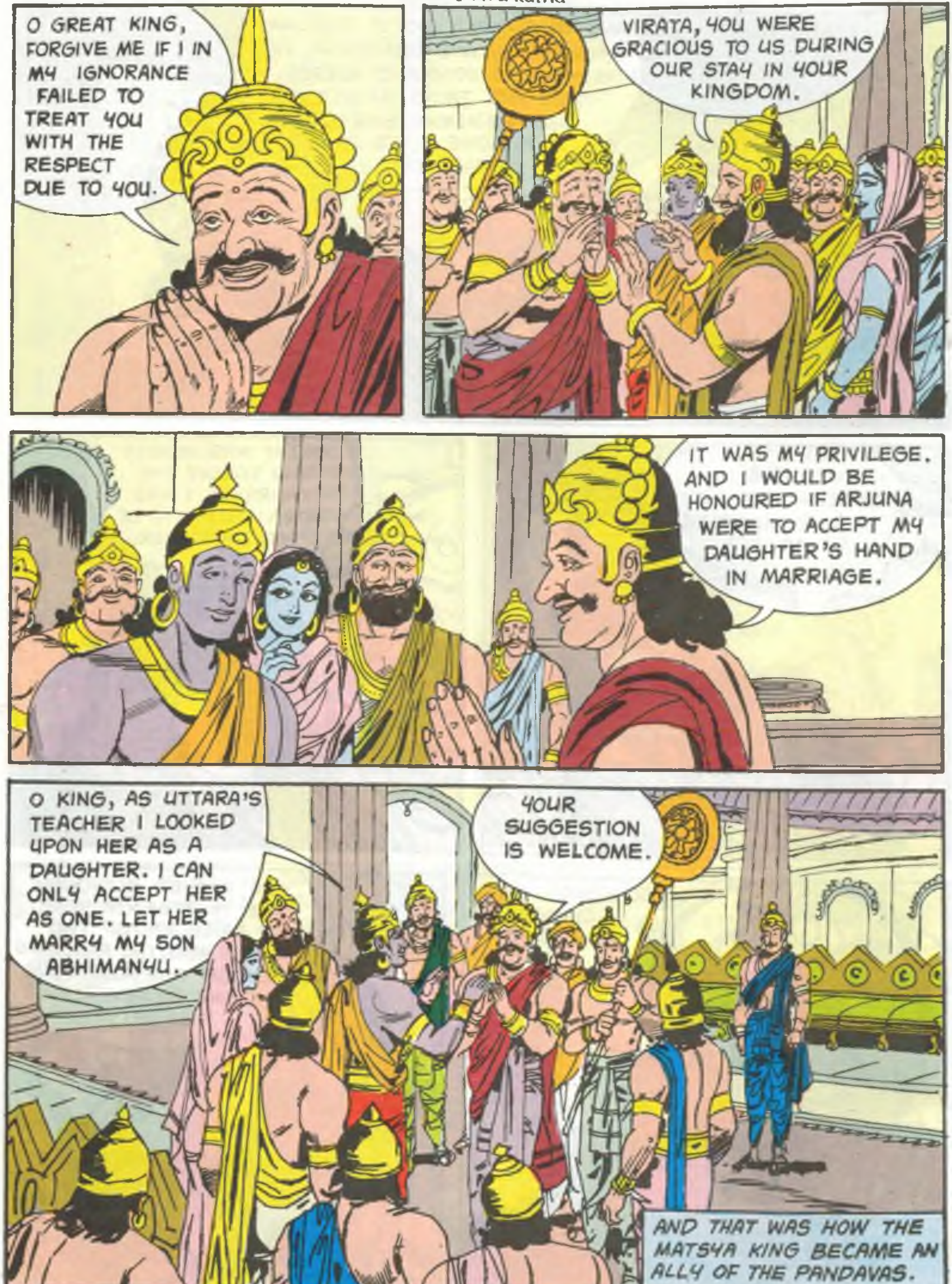

BUT FOR BRIHANNALA'S SKILL, THE PRINCE COULD NOT HAVE ACHIEVED THIS VICTORY.
I SAID STOP IT!
BLOOD!
SAIRANDHRI, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I AM DOING THIS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, O KING.
IF PIOUS KANKA'S BLOOD TOUCHES THE GROUND, THERE WILL BE DROUGHT IN YOUR KINGDOM.
JUST THEN—
YOUR MAJESTY, THE PRINCE HAS ARRIVED!


A FEW MINUTES LATER —
UTTARA!
FATHER!
I'M PROUD OF YOU, MY SON.
WHEN UTTARA TURNED TO PAY HIS RESPECTS TO KANKA —
YOU ARE HURT, SIR!
FATHER, WHO HAS INJURED THE VENERABLE KANKA?
I DID. I WAS ANNOYED AT HIS PERSISTENT PRAISE OF BRIHANNALA FOR YOUR VICTORY.
KANKA IS WISE. WE MUST SEEK HIS PARDON.
VIRATA ACTED ON HIS SON'S ADVICE.
FORGIVE ME, KANKA. I SHOULDN'T HAVE LOST MY TEMPER.
I'VE ALREADY FORGOTTEN THE INCIDENT.


THEN VIRATA ENTHUSIASTICALLY TURNED TO HIS SON.
TELL ME HOW YOU FOUGHT VETERANS LIKE BHEESHMA, DRONA AND KARNA...
IT WAS NOT I WHO FOUGHT THEM.
WHO WAS IT THEN?
WHAT SHALL I SAY? I HAVE PROMISED ARJUNA TO KEEP HIS SECRET.
WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER? WHO WAS IT?
A...A CELESTIAL WARRIOR CAME TO OUR RESCUE.
A CELESTIAL WARRIOR? WHO WAS HE? AND WHERE IS HE?
HE IS NOT HERE NOW. BUT HE WILL MAKE HIS APPEARANCE IN A DAY OR TWO.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
YOU WILL, FATHER. PLEASE BE PATIENT.


TWO DAYS LATER WHEN THE KING ENTERED THE COURT—
KANKA! SEATED ON THE THRONE MEANT FOR KINGS!
VALALA, ARISHTANEMI, GRANTHIKA, BRIHANNALA! WHAT HAS COME OVER YOU?
THESE ARE SEATS MEANT FOR ROYAL PERSONAGES!
IF SO, THE ONE YOU CALL KANKA DESERVES THE FIRST AMONG THEM.
HE IS NONE OTHER THAN KING YUDHISHTHIRA!


AND VALALA THE COOK IS BHEEMA. ARISHTANEMI AND GRANTHIKA, THE KEEPERS OF COWS AND HORSES, ARE THE TWINS, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA; SAIRANDHRI IS NONE OTHER THAN DRAUPADI.
I, THE DANCE - TEACHER TO YOUR DAUGHTER, AM ARJUNA.
WHAT ?
AND IT WAS ARJUNA WHO FOUGHT THE KAURAVAS. I WAS PRIVILEGED TO BE HIS CHARIOTEER.
SO KANKA···ER··· YUDHISHTHIRA WAS RIGHT.
YES, FATHER. ALTHOUGH THE THIRTEENTH YEAR OF EXILE ENDED TWO DAYS AGO, THE PANDAVAS CHOSE THIS AUSPICIOUS DAY TO REVEAL THEMSELVES.


O GREAT KING, FORGIVE ME IF I IN MY IGNORANCE FAILED TO TREAT YOU WITH THE RESPECT DUE TO YOU.
VIRATA, YOU WERE GRACIOUS TO US DURING OUR STAY IN YOUR KINGDOM.
IT WAS MY PRIVILEGE. AND I WOULD BE HONOURED IF ARJUNA WERE TO ACCEPT MY DAUGHTER'S HAND IN MARRIAGE.
O KING, AS UTTARA'S TEACHER I LOOKED UPON HER AS A DAUGHTER. I CAN ONLY ACCEPT HER AS ONE. LET HER MARRY MY SON ABHIMANYU.
YOUR SUGGESTION IS WELCOME.
AND THAT WAS HOW THE MATSYA KING BECAME AN ALLY OF THE PANDAVAS.

Illustrated Classics From India

The Pandavas In Hiding

When the Kuru elders granted the arid territory of Khandavaprastha to the Pandavas, little did their hostile cousins, the Kauravas, suspect that the Pandavas would soon turn it into a flourishing kingdom.

Indraprastha, as the kingdom was called, was the envy of the Kauravas. They were bent on making it theirs, by fair means or foul. Since the Pandavas were too strong for them, they had to resort to cunning.

They invited the Pandavas to a game of dice. The Kauravas resorted to cheating and won. The Pandavas had to go into exile for thirteen years – twelve years to be spent in the forest and the thirteenth year incognito. The thirteenth year was the most crucial for, if they were successful in remaining anonymous for the entire year, they would be restored their kingdom; but if they were recognized, they would have to go into exile for another thirteen years.

This *Amar Chitra Katha*, based on the Virata Parva of the *Mahabharata*, is the story of how Duryodhana, the eldest Kaurava, tried to make the Pandavas reveal their presence in the thirteenth year.

Editor: Anant Pai

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